

School Closure Toolkit: Health and Wellness

Updated 3/24/20

I. Summary

Maintaining the health and safety of our students and staff through events such as pandemics or natural disasters is an important consideration. During times of uncertainty and crisis, children just like adults may suffer from acute periods of anxiety, worry or stress. School closures can further contribute to experiences of inconsistency, which can be especially challenging for some students.

For students who receive additional supports through an IEP or 504, it will be necessary to follow special education guidance to meet applicable requirements. Please reference the special populations toolkit for information pertaining to students who receive occupational therapy, mental or behavioral health services through an IEP or 504 and review the [Tennessee Department of Education's Services to Students with Disabilities COVID-19 Guidance document](#).

The purpose of this document is to help district leaders think through opportunities to support the overall wellness of students and staff during school closures in response to COVID-19. The document includes the following:

- [Checklist](#) for health and safety considerations and related actions
- [Best Practices](#) for supporting the health and safety of students and staff
- [Recommended Schedules and Procedures](#)
- [Resource List](#) for school and district leaders

For questions related to the health and safety of students and staff, please contact Whole.Child@tn.gov.

II. Checklist

District

- Virtually convene special education supervisors and coordinated school health coordinators to develop systems of collaboration with school-based staff and establish consistency of support and resources (such as access to distance learning content) delivered to schools.

- Create any district-specific guidance (such as general anxiety and stress management content, or guidance which should be shared with all students and families) and/or coordinate with local community partners to assist with resource collection and determine viable service options (such as telehealth, video conferencing, phone calls, etc.) to support continuity of service.

- Identify and catalogue innovative options for continuation of student and staff support and communicate that guidance to school leaders regularly.

- Identify, catalogue and share local community resources students, staff and families may access during school closure.

- Consider establishing a “distress line”, where students or parents can call when they are in distress and can’t find help for any number of issues.

- Communicate district guidance with school leaders and school-based student support staff.

- Establish consistent and routine communication channels with staff members and district leaders, providing increased access to mental health support staff.

School

- Incorporate all physical health related guidance provided by the CDC, Department of Health and Department of Education which is regularly updated [here](#).

- Provide a list of system-involved students (welfare, courts, foster, probation, etc) to local law enforcement and create a plan to ensure students receive well-being checks.

- Announce allowable building activity to teachers to allow for the preparation of student work that will be sent home (i.e., device check out, assigning of books, packaging school materials, etc.) Any gatherings within school facilities should comply with applicable social

distancing guidance as well as health safety recommendations.

- Convene teacher teams and school-based student support staff (special education teachers, nurses, counselors, SROs, etc.) to identify students receiving mental health services and those for whom additional support might be beneficial (template below).

- Communicate with families regarding proactive management of acute and chronic health conditions, especially where medication is involved. Be sure to properly exchange medication with the parent / guardian as medication cannot be sent with students. As needed, develop a call schedule to ensure students are receiving consistent medical treatment at home.

- Establish an ongoing communication plan with families of students receiving supports to ensure alignment of at-home service strategies and techniques and develop a process to identify additional students experiencing challenges while schools are closed.

- Consider utilizing conference call lines or zoom to continue club meetings, athletic team meetings, etc. so that students stay connected to one another in a healthy way.

- Create class-based action plans during closure (template below).

- Create class and school-based action plans for all students that allows for processing their experience when schools reopen and create and review individualized re-entry plans with families of students receiving additional supports (template below).

- Develop referral procedures outlining when and how teachers should refer students to support staff (school counselors, social workers, etc.) once school reopens.

- Establish consistent and routine communication channels with staff members, providing increased access to mental health support staff.

District Spotlight:

Following the Governor's request to enact school closures statewide, Washington County immediately began implementation of a protocol through which every student received daily telephone or electronic contact with their teacher.

Special Education Supervisor Dr. Mindy Myers has worked closely with TDOE's Special Populations Division to ensure that, in the midst of this rapidly-evolving public health concern, all Washington County Special Education students continue to receive support from the district in alignment with IDEA law.

III. Best Practices

[CDC Guidance for Onsite Employees](#)

[Potential Duties for On-Site Employees](#)

[Employee Care](#)

[Student Considerations](#)

[TDOE Guidance for Crisis Response and Recovery](#)

CDC Guidance for Onsite Employees

If it necessary for some employees to report to their building, plans should be in place to allow for social distancing to the extent possible, in line with Centers for Disease Control and Protection (CDC) [guidelines](#). As [recommended](#) by the CDC:

- Large gatherings and close contact should be avoided so explore alternatives to meeting in groups and consider virtual convenings,
- Staff should practice hand hygiene,
- Frequently touched surfaces should be thoroughly and regularly [sanitized](#),
- [Symptoms](#) of COVID-19 should be posted around the building, and
- Staff who are feeling sick should not report to work

Note that staff who are asked to report to their building may have concerns, such as a lack of access to childcare or being a member of a population [identified](#) as especially vulnerable. These employees may need accommodations or contingency plans.

Potential Duties for On-Site Employees

For districts choosing to identify alternative work for employees, options might include the following:

- **School-based mental health staff** — review all service plans, communicate with community partners to ensure continuity of service, collaborate with teachers to determine additional student or class needs, and provide access before, during and after closure to alleviate anxiety, worry and stress, and provide required services to students.
- **Nurses** - contact parents/guardians to ensure medications/supplies are available to continue management of acute or chronic health conditions. Follow your district's policies/procedures regarding signing out medications to parents/guardians (template below). If needed, set a regular schedule to call students or families with reminders about medication administration. Ensure that medication that remains in the school building during closure has been secured and maintains temperature requirements.
- **Teachers** — collaborate and communicate with mental health professionals to ensure students receive services, accommodate or ensure all students have access to any shared content, provide opportunities for processing the pandemic in class, and establish restorative practices upon student return.
- **School and district leaders** — provide opportunities to promote both student and staff wellness before, during and after school closure.
- **School-based support staff** — assist teachers and mental health staff in ensuring the physical and mental wellbeing of students and staff by compiling best practices and identifying opportunities to provide additional support and resources.
- **Coordinated School Health Coordinator** – communicate and identify community partners that can provide additional health related services for students, staff and families. Coordinate opportunities for schools to connect individuals to services while also bringing in community partners to provide supports to the whole school.

Employee Care

If staff are at home, encourage, and provide access when possible, to mental health professionals or self-care techniques such as mindfulness. If staff are reporting to the school building, consider staff-wide practices (ensuring adequate distancing) such as yoga, group exercise, or mindful minutes.

Student Considerations

Students will return to school with questions and possible anxiety issues. These should be handled through your support services including school counselors, social workers, school psychologists, and nurses. These professionals are equipped to best handle anxiety issues that arise and should be mobilized to provide entire classroom presentations on anxiety and worry. A consistent referral process for accessing school counselors and social workers should be communicated with each teacher and staff member to lessen the confusion when students return.

TDOE Guidance for Crisis Response and Recovery

The department has developed the [Tennessee Schools: PREPARE manual](#) to assist districts and schools in advancing the response and recovery portions of their emergency management plans. This manual includes planning and postvention checklists, guidance on restoring community on the first days back to school, typical trauma responses by developmental age, typical trauma reactions, and many other resources.

IV. Recommended Schedules and Procedures

Onsite employees should follow regular hours in accordance with their employment contract. In addition, for offsite employees, implementing clear protocols around communication, as well as daily and weekly expectations is vital. Below are a checklist and templates to assist in communicating schedules and procedures.

Checklist

Before closing:

- Create district level policies or protocols for ensuring student health and wellness, communicating those expectations and opportunities to schools. If possible, a collection of local resources can be shared with schools.
- Identify students who may benefit from additional health check-ins and develop a plan for service (template below).
- Return medication to families along with information from the student's individual health care plan, promoting continuity in treatment.
- Communicate any developed plans with students and families.

During closing:

- Provide additional supports and services to students, which could include innovative service methods and involvement from community based service providers (template below).
- Communicate with students who may benefit from school staff checking in on them.
- Nurses may call students who could benefit from reminders about taking medication

Upon reopening:

- Develop plans to transition students back to school and back to class (template below).
- More frequently meet with students who demonstrate shifts in behavior or have demonstrated signs of anxiety, worry or stress.
- Provide opportunities for students to share and process their experience during the pandemic.

- Be ready to provide access to additional health related resources once school reopens.

Template: Individual Student Support Plan

Student Name: [Insert]

School-based POC: [Insert]

Method for Communication (select one)

- Call
- Virtual conference (Facetime, Skype, etc.)

Weekly Schedule

Monday: [Insert duration of time] from [Insert time am / pm]

Tuesday: [Insert duration of time] from [Insert time am / pm]

Wednesday: [Insert duration of time] from [Insert time am / pm]

Thursday: [Insert duration of time] from [Insert time am / pm]

Friday: [Insert duration of time] from [Insert time am / pm]

Services

The following is a list of services provided to the student

Needs or Services	How services are provided

Resources

List of additional resources that could benefit the student:

Resource	How to acquire/access the resource

Documentation of Services

List the services that were provided

Date of Service	Time of Service	Type of Service Provided / Notes

Template: Teacher or Student Support Staff Service Plan

Teacher Name: [Insert]

Schedule

Monday:

Student	Time of Service	Type of Service Provided

Tuesday:

Student	Time of Service	Type of Service Provided

Wednesday:

Student	Time of Service	Type of Service Provided

Thursday:

Student	Time of Service	Type of Service Provided

Friday:

Student	Time of Service	Type of Service Provided

Template: Additional Student Identification

Teacher Name: [Insert]

School-based POC: [Insert]

Student	Demonstrated Need	Service	School Staff Responsible

Template: Medication Tracking

Class: [Insert]

Teacher Name: [Insert]

School-based POC (nurse): [Insert]

Student Name: [Insert]		Medication: [Insert]	
Date Picked-Up From School: [Insert]	[Parent Signature]		
Date Returned To School: [Insert]	[Parent Signature]		
Prescription medication is returned in original pharmacy labeled container displaying ALL of the following information: [Yes or No]			
Child's name	Prescription number	Medication name and dosage	Administration route or other directions
Date	Licensed prescriber's name	Pharmacy name, address, and phone number	
Any change in medical condition or medication? If so, what? *Please update the Individual Health Care Plan [Write Response]			
Was emergency medication administered during the closure? What happened? When? What medical provider followed-up? [Write Response]			

V. Resource List

- [Planning for Virtual/Distance School Counseling During an Emergency Shutdown](#) is a brief one-page document from the American School Counselor Association (NEW 3/23)
- [America's Promise Alliance COVID-19 Resources](#) is a google doc capturing links to a variety of available resources collected from organizations across the country
- [US Department of Education COVID-19 Information and Resources for Schools and School Personnel](#)
- [TDOE's Tennessee Schools: PREPARE](#) is a toolkit for assisting schools in developing an emergency management plan
- [The National Council for Behavioral Health](#): *Navigating the Behavioral Health Impacts of the Coronavirus*
- Mental Health America: General Resources (included below in the appendix)
- Mental Health America: Erase the Stigma Program (included below in the appendix)
- [Association for Middle Level Education](#): Supporting Middle Level Educators through COVID-19
- [Child Mind Institute](#): Talking to Kids About the Coronavirus
- [National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#): Parent/Caregiver Guide to Helping Families Cope with the Coronavirus Disease
- [SAMHSA](#): Mental Health Services Locator

VI. Appendix



Crisis Text Line **Text “TN” to 741741**
Available 24/7, you can access a trained crisis counselor 24/7 by simply texting “TN” to 741741.

Mental Health Cooperative **mhc-tn.org**
The Mental Health Cooperative only sees people who have TennCare or no coverage. They have facilities in Nashville, Murfreesboro, Clarksville, Columbia, Dickson, Gallatin, Cookeville, Cleveland, Chattanooga, and other locations. (615) 726-3340

Mental Health America of the MidSouth **mhamidsouth.org**
MHA is about 75 years old and is your one-stop-shop for finding resources that you need. They provide education and training on suicide prevention, student mental/emotional health, online screenings, trauma-informed schools, Alzheimer’s support, human trafficking recovery, how to access and use local resources, and more. (615) 269-5355

Mental Health Association of East TN **mhaet.org**
This Mental Health America affiliate provides resources, supports, and education throughout East Tennessee. They have a solid school-based program known as Mental Health First Aid.

Mobile Crisis
This is the best resource to call when someone is in psychosis or suicidal. Like an ambulance, they will come to you, and they specialize in behavioral health. Just call 855-274-7471.

My Health Care Home **myHCHTN.org**
This website can help navigate you to your nearest Middle Tennessee charitable clinic, which can provide mental health, dental care, or primary care services. Under their “resources” tab are screenings, prescription discount cards, and more.

NAMI Tennessee **namitn.org**
Provides support groups and classes for families and individuals impacted by mental illness. They have family groups throughout Tennessee.

Nashville Psychotherapy Institute **nashvillepsychotherapyinstitute.org**
This online directory helps find local therapists in Middle Tennessee. For example, you can “mine down” to find a female psychologist who speaks Spanish, accepts Cigna, specializes in postpartum depression, and works near 37027.

Recovery Within Reach **recoverywithinreach.org**
This website provides great information about housing, peer services, employment, art therapy, personal stories, and other recovery services.

Prescription Discounts **FamilyWize.org Milligram.biz GoodRx.com**
These websites provide discounts on prescriptions and navigate you to cheaper Rx resources.

TAADAS

taadas.org

TAADAS is everything for addictions: opioids, heroin, gambling, and co-occurring disorders. Their “Red Line” is available via text or call 24/7 at 800-889-9789. They’ll help you find a drug counselor, detox, and more, regardless of insurance.

TAMHO (TN Assn of Mental Health Organizations)

tamho.org

TAMHO is the trade association for community mental health centers like Centerstone, Volunteer Health, Alliance Health, Quinco, Carey Counseling, and other large mental health facilities. They focus on inpatient care, housing, residential care, and industry best practices.

TN Dept of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

This state department oversees all behavioral health strategies and funds many programs. Call them to learn more about peer services, housing, employment, education, etc. 800-560-5767

TN Mental Health Consumers Association

tmhca-tn.org

This organization is run by people with mental illnesses for people with mental illnesses. They promote recovery and community through peer support, education, and advocacy. They manage 45 peer support centers across Tennessee.

TN Suicide Prevention Network

tspn.org

Half of Mental Health America’s staff consists of the TN Suicide Prevention Network. This is a strong, statewide, volunteer program that provides free trainings and advocacy to save lives.

Mental Health America (MHA) of the MidSouth

Erasing the Stigma Youth (ETSY) Program

THE ETSY EXPERIENCE

The goal of the **Erase the Stigma Program** is to educate children about their mental health and emotional well-being; as well as, teach children how to identify coping skills to manage their emotions in positive and safe ways. MHA introduces mental health education and resources with **I.C. Hope®**, the program's mascot.



 The **bandage** serves as a reminder that mental illnesses are real and treatable.

 The **life preserver** serves as a reminder that every life is valuable and worth saving. It is okay to ask for help.

THE ETSY PROGRAM

This program is provided **complimentary** to schools in certain counties

Middle TN Service Area: Cheatham, Davidson, Dickson, Maury, Montgomery, Robertson, Rutherford, Sumner, Trousdale, Williamson, and Wilson

West TN Service Area: Carroll, Chester, Decatur, Gibson, Hardeman, Hardin, Lake, Madison, McNairy, Obion, Shelby, and Weakley

THE ETSY PROGRAM TOPICS

Topics for grades K-5:

Anger Management, Bullying, Stress & Worry, Identifying Feelings, Handling a Bad Day, Self-Esteem Issues, Understanding Suicide, and Dealing with Grief

Topics for grades 6-12:

Anxiety & Worrying, Body Image & Eating Disorders, Bullying, Dual Diagnosis, Healthy Relationships (*Summer 2020*), Mental Health & Stigmas, Risky Decision & Substance Abuse, Stress & Depression, Speak Out: Suicide Awareness, and Test Anxiety

SCHEDULING

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To get information on other MHA programs and resources, please visit MHA at www.mhamidsouth.org.

